

# The Four and More model

A tool for systematically exploring behavior in complex organizations

V:1[08.25] 

## 1 Clarify your Context

Pin down where, when, and with whom the behavior happens before interpreting it.

**Where:** \_\_\_\_\_ **When:** \_\_\_\_\_

**With whom:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Generate Hypotheses

Use Tinbergen's Four Questions, with Sapolsky's timescales, to develop multiple possible explanations.

**Mechanism:** Immediate triggers (seconds → minutes)

**Seconds:** What's happening right now? (*meeting dynamics, visible stress, tone, ...*)

**Minutes:** What just happened? (*email, deadline, leadership ask, ...*)

**Possible Mechanism Hypotheses**

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Development (Ontogeny)** Learning history (recent → long-term)

**Recent:** What's happened in recent sprints/months? (*missed deadlines, staffing changes, ...*)

**Long-term:** What's the team's organizational history? (*layoffs, leadership styles, prior blame, ...*)

**Possible Development Hypotheses**

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**Function (Adaptive value)** What role does this behavior play?

**Immediate:** What does it solve right now? (*avoid conflict, look busy, ...*)

**Ongoing:** What relationship or stability does it maintain?

**Possible Function Hypotheses**

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Evolution (Phylogeny)** Deep or cultural origins

**Organizational:** What past company norms might shape this? (*startup culture, merger habits, ...*)

**Industry/Culture:** What broader patterns does it reflect? (*tech norms, client service expectations, ...*)

**Possible Evolution Hypotheses**

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## 3 Set The Aim

Direction of travel, not a fixed goal.

*More of* \_\_\_\_\_ *and fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

## 4 Safe to Fail Experiments

Design small probes to test your hypotheses and move toward your aim. Describe your experiment and why it is safe.

**Mechanism**

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**Development**

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**Function**

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**Evolution**

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## 5 Review and Iterate

What happened? What did we learn? What's next?

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